



MENCAP CYCLE CHALLENGE 2015 – BRECON TO CARDIFF



Bright and early on the morning of 25th September the Lewis Dream Team (L-R Dan Watts, Del Wislocki, Steve James, Chris Thomas, Jane Evans, Curtis Hughes, Gareth Evans and Dale Thomas) set off to participate in a charity cycle challenge in aid of Mencap supported by their logistics team of Lyndon Williams and Kevin Yearsley.

It was with some trepidation that we lined up at the start, South Wales Police had apparently sent an **expert** team and there was some serious kit on show – doubts crept in to our rag-tag looking brigade, ranging in experience and kit from the ancient to the state of the art between us – this would take some serious teamwork !!

The 54 mile route between Brecon and Cardiff that lay ahead took us through stunning scenery along canal paths, forest tracks and cycle trails and passed many of South Wales industrial heritage sites – all bathed in glorious sunshine for the day which ensured that moral was high as we set off at 3 minute intervals between teams.

A brisk early pace ensured that we passed the Reynolds Architects and Mencap teams pretty quickly along the canal path towards Talybont. As we left Talybont the terrain became more serious, a steep, narrow, cobbled and potholed footpath loomed ahead – and so did the South Wales Police team. The mile long climb had us neck and neck as we reached the summit and started on a welcome descent through the forestry trails above Talybont Reservoir, but the breather was short-lived, a 4 mile long 250m high climb approached and was to be the toughest challenge of the route. The team became spread out as each rider settled in to their own rhythm and pace but once re-united at the top we were well ahead of the Police team and we had time to take on some fuel and refreshment before setting off again towards Ponsticil Reservoir, where another steep climb through the forest lay in wait.



We paused to take in the view from the top (18 miles completed) and set off again on a gentle descent in to Merthyr Tydfil - the midway check-in point.

As we paused to top up on some energy snacks and drinks at the check in point it was evident that the brisk early pace and some inadequate padding was taking its' toll on a couple of the team – but crucially team spirit was strong and with the boost from the feeding station starting to kick in we mounted up for the 27 mile stretch to Cardiff.



By the time we reached Pontypridd with 13 miles still left to go 2 of the guys were struggling badly – cramp had set in, body parts were bruised and their senses of humour had been dropped on the floor some 4 miles previous and they looked absolutely broken.

Desperate times, the emergency pick up vehicle was almost summoned but when the going gets tough, the tough get going – aided by one of Dels’ magic pills and the cramp abating, the guys refused to give in and we set off again to the rallying cry of “Freeeeeddom !! “ Mel Gibson style, intent on making the finish where a beer and curry lay in wait.

For the last 5 miles the team stuck close together, encouraging the battered ones amongst us along, some of whom couldn’t face another second sat in the saddle and spent the remainder of the journey stood up in the pedals – no mean feat !!



At last, Sophia Gardens came in to view, the finish line lay ahead – we’d made it, and as we crossed the line to the cheers of the huge crowd – at least 20 in number, our thoughts immediately turned to one thing – where were the police team?

It appears that the old adage of “X” is an unknown quantity and “Spurt” is a drip under pressure is true as they trailed in some 45 minutes later in last place – some comfort for Curtis who’d just been reprimanded by the Chief Constable for bunny-hopping onto and pirouetting off of the final roundabout at the finish line.

And so as we sat down to our well-earned meal we were able to reflect:-

-  Over £5000 raised for Mencap
-  A superb team spirit built
-  A willingness to attempt bigger and better
-  But never again shall we look rag-tag
-  Lewis Cycling Team kit on order !!!

